

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE LACK OF PARENT PARTICIPATION  
IN A HEAD START PROGRAM: THE CASE OF THE  
ROBINSON CENTER IN ATLANTA

A DEGREE PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

BY  
LARRY JAMES YEOMAN

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 1984

R. i-ii P. 69

ABSTRACT

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

YEOMAN, LARRY JAMES

B.A., Morris Brown College, 1978

An Exploratory Study of the Lack of Parent Participation in a Head Start Program: The Case of the Robinson Center in Atlanta

Advisor: Professor George Kugblenu

Degree Paper dated April 23, 1984

The primary intent of this degree paper is to discuss the participation of parents whose children are enrolled in the Atlanta Head Start Program. An attempt has been made to ascertain the extent to which parents are involved in the program.

The participation of parents in the Head Start Program is very crucial to the program's success. This study reveals that parent participation in the activities of the three centers under study, namely, the Robinson Center, the Grady Homes Center, and the English Avenue Center is marginal and does not live up to the program's standard of "maximum citizen participation." On the other hand, the staff members at these centers discharge their respective duties in a manner that encourages maximum parent participation in the program's activities. However, if the centers could provide transportation to and from the centers for classroom activities or parent meetings, the lack of parent participation could be resolved.

The primary source of data for this study was obtained from interviews with the Director of the Head Start Program in the Atlanta metropolitan area, the Directors of the three centers involved in the study, the Parent Involvement Coordinator, as well as interviews with the parents whose children are enrolled in the three Head Start Centers. Also, a wide variety of secondary information, books, periodicals, and unpublished materials was used.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
II.	THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING .....	5
III.	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	13
IV.	LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
V.	ANALYTICAL APPROACH .....	35
VI.	ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM .....	38
VII.	ANALYSIS OF THREE HEAD START CENTERS .....	44
VIII.	CONCLUSION .....	55
IX.	RECOMMENDATIONS .....	57
	APPENDICES .....	59
	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1960s, the country awoke to the realization that thirty-five million Americans were poor. The inequality of housing, employment, education, and living conditions that the civil rights movement called attention to was affecting not only blacks but other minorities and poor whites as well. According to the studies undertaken by President Kennedy's administration, poverty was widespread, and its consequences were threatening the nation's social and economic well-being.<sup>1</sup>

In a study on poverty, Oscar Lewis, an anthropologist who worked in the slums of Latin America, identified characteristics common to impoverished communities the world over and suggested that these characteristics constituted a "culture of poverty." These elements include lack of cash flow and savings, fear of the larger society, social structures enhanced by a physically self-contained community, matriarchal and authoritarian families, early maturation of children, and feelings of helplessness and fatalism among individuals. As the social and economic oppression continues, the culture of poverty is passed on from generation to generation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Jeanette Valentine and Edward Zigler, Project Head Start (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph M. Kramer, Participation of the Poor (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 18.

In his 1964 State of the Union Message, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed the war on poverty and went on to declare that "the central problem is to protect and restore man's satisfaction in belonging to a community where he can find security and significance."<sup>3</sup>

As a result of Johnson's declaration, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was passed. This was a bill which authorized assistance for Community Action Programs to combat poverty. The purpose of the Act was to conduct an all-out, continuous, sustained war on poverty in accord with a strategy which:

(a) strikes at the main front of poverty - the perpetuation and transmission of poverty, ignorance, disease, squalor, and hopelessness from one generation to another.

(b) uses weapons directly aimed at improving human motivation and performance; education, vocational and work training, health services, job opportunities, a decent home in a healthy productive environment, and harmonious and stable family and community life.

(c) attacks poverty through comprehensive action programs, initiated, planned, and carried out in local communities.

(d) mobilizes existing and new Federal assistance and services to support local Community Action Programs.<sup>4</sup>

Out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 emerged the Head Start Program, a program geared toward the education of

---

<sup>3</sup>Daniel P. Moynihan, Maximum Feasible Misunderstandings (New York: The Free Press, 1970), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

pre-school children. It was a creative, innovative effort to interrupt the cycle of poverty, the nearly inevitable sequence of poor parenting which leads to children with social and intellectual deficits, which in turn leads to poor school performance, joblessness, and poverty, leading again to high risk birth, inappropriate parenting, and so continues the cycle.<sup>5</sup>

Other features of the program are:

(1) The belief that the program would break the poverty cycle and make changes in the individual and the community.

(2) Service would be rendered to disadvantaged children who are products of families that meet the Office of Economic Opportunity's guidelines.

(3) The belief that young children can be helped to learn.

(4) Emphasis is placed on parent involvement and development of a Central Policy Advisory Committee composed of at least 50 percent of parents.

(5) Provision of medical and dental services.

(6) Provision of at least one hot meal per day.

(7) Provision of low pupil-teacher ratio.

(8) Provision of extensive use of volunteers.<sup>6</sup>

Head Start has become an effective, flexible, and comprehensive program for children and families.

The Head Start Program is committed to helping children of poor families to share in a comprehensive developmental program of

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

educational, social, and health services and places emphasis on stimulating parents to become partners in the learning experience of their children. The program is designed to be a vital part of the Community Action Program. The comprehensive program is intended to be the foundation for the child's long-term education and employment potential as well as health and social well-being.

The objective of this study is to determine whether maximum parent participation is inadequate only at the Robinson Center or if this is a pattern for most of the Head Start Centers in the metropolitan Atlanta area.



## II. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

### A. Background History of the Agency

The Head Start Program began in the summer of 1965 under the Community Action Program as part of President Johnson's administration's war on poverty. The program was administered through the then newly created Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The original aims of the program included improving children's self-concepts and social competence, improving family function, helping families to help themselves, and to improve disadvantaged children's educational performance.

The Atlanta regional Head Start Program began in the summer of 1965 and has been directed by Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Inc. (EOA), with funds from the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Administration of Children, Youth, and Families. The program is presently funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. Presently, the Atlanta area Head Start Program has an enrollment of 1,503 children.<sup>7</sup>

The program contains five components: (1) Health, (2) Education, (3) Nutrition, (4) Social and Psychological Services, and (5) Parental Involvement.

Children who live in EOA service areas (low-income neighborhoods) and whose families' incomes are within the federal

---

<sup>7</sup>Helen Wingfield, private interview at the headquarters of the Atlanta Head Start Program, Atlanta, Georgia, May 1983.

guidelines are eligible for the Head Start Child Development Program. Currently, a family of four must have a combined annual income of no more than \$9,300 to qualify under federal regulations. Special Education is also provided for handicapped children.

During the internship experience, the writer was employed as a Social Service Worker from February 1979 to December 1979 through the Department of Human and Community Development Program (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act - CETA). The writer worked at the Robinson Head Start Center under the Director, Ms. Freddie Cobbs.

The following were the writer's assigned duties and responsibilities: assisted in the recruitment and enrollment of disadvantaged children into the program; performed follow-up activities for individual families as needed; and assisted families in selecting an appropriate plan of action; performed short-term counseling with families; maintained personal records on each child and family; made home visits to the families of children enrolled in the program; assessed family needs on an ongoing basis and made referrals to appropriate community agencies; prepared daily reports; solicited contributions and assistance from a variety of community agencies on behalf of the children and their families. In addition to these responsibilities, the writer attended various meetings and workshops that were related to the program.

B. Objectives of the Parent Involvement/Volunteer Component of the Atlanta Head Start Program

In the Annual Program Report for 1983, Ms. Helen Wingfield, Coordinator of the Parent Involvement/Volunteer Component of the Atlanta Head Start Program stated three objectives of the Parent Involvement/Volunteer Component of the program. These are:

Objective #1: To involve five hundred (500) Head Start parents in the process of making decisions about the nature and operation of the Child Development Program throughout the program year. This objective will be accompanied by:

(1) Providing orientation for thirteen hundred and forty (1,340) parents.

(2) Organizing the Head Start Parent Community Organization structure into:

- (a) One Central Policy Council
- (b) Twelve Parent Committees
- (c) Six Component Sub-committees

(3) Holding nine parent meetings a year for each Head Start site.

(4) Involving twelve parents, one from each Head Start site, in Economic Opportunity Atlanta's community organization structure.

(5) Monitoring twelve parent groups at least four times a year to determine weaknesses, strengths, and level of participation.

(6) Providing parent involvement training to one hundred

and fifty (150) staff on the parent participation structure.<sup>8</sup>

Objective #2: To provide during the program year a system that will involve five hundred (500) Head Start parents in self-designed activities which will lead to enhancing the development of their skills, self-enrichment, and employment. This objective will be achieved by:

(1) Providing at least two opportunities for parents to participate in designing the training program for the 1983-1984 school year. It is felt by the agency that parents should become more aware of issues that are important to their families and to the Head Start Program. Parents will participate in designing the training program by:

- (a) involving at least one parent, from twelve committees, in designing the parent orientation training program.
- (b) providing at least one opportunity for parents to be involved in planning agency visits, community projects, workshops and social activities. This function will help parents build confidence in their ability to develop projects.
- (c) providing at least one opportunity for parents to share ideas and information with other Head Start and similar programs, thereby making parents more aware of other programs and their services.

(2) Recruiting at least one hundred (100) parents for special training in classroom procedures to help parents to be better able to assist teachers in the classroom.

---

<sup>8</sup>Economic Opportunity Atlanta Head Start Program - Parent Involvement, "Management by Objectives", Annual Program Report, Fiscal year 1983-1984, pp. 2-6.

(3) Recruiting one hundred (100) parents for test readiness classes and Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes. These classes are to be provided to encourage parents to further their education and employment ability.<sup>9</sup>

Objective #3: To increase the number of volunteers in the Head Start Program by one hundred (100) people through an organized program year. This objective will be achieved by:

- (1) Implementing a system for recruiting volunteers by:
  - (a) developing close contact with volunteer agencies.
  - (b) developing a filing system for all volunteer referrals from other agencies.

This function is done to encourage volunteers to participate from other agencies as well as the community at large.

(2) Providing training to one hundred and fifty (150) staff on the Head Start Volunteer Program. The training sessions will focus on:

- (a) "The role of staff in the Volunteer Program."
  - (b) "How to effectively use volunteers in the classroom."
- (3) Providing a system for recognizing volunteers by:
  - (a) encouraging "Volunteer of the Month" programs in each center program.
  - (b) planning an awards banquet to recognize Central Policy-Council (CPC) members and outstanding services of volunteers.<sup>10</sup>

This system of recognizing volunteers is essential to encouraging more volunteers to contribute their time to the

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-11.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-16.

program and it also lets the volunteers know that their services are appreciated.

The justification of parent involvement in the Head Start Program is that parents have the right to participate in the decision-making process that affect their children and their lives.

### C. Parent Involvement in the Head Start Program

The idea that parents should participate in pre-school intervention program, both on administrative policy committees and in the classrooms, was almost unprecedented in American educational policy. The crucial importance of parents to a child's optimal development, now an accepted fact, was not widely recognized at the time Head Start was developed.

The Head Start Planning Committee's decision to make parent involvement a key component of Head Start proved sound from a child development viewpoint. At the time that this decision was made, parent involvement was both politically and practically crucial to Head Start. As a war on poverty program, Head Start represented a new attitude on the part of the government toward the poor. The first Head Start summer programs opened only a few months after the President's planning committee's report,<sup>11</sup> and parents were needed immediately to provide personnel for all aspects of the program. Head Start

---

<sup>11</sup>This committee, under the direction of Sargeant Shriver, Director of the Economic Opportunity Office, was composed of fifteen members, representing the fields of pediatrics, public health, nursing, education, child psychiatry, child development, and psychology.

could not have begun without the involvement of parents, and thus the committee's vision of parent participation was realized at the very outset.

From its inception, Head Start has demonstrated that parents want to participate in the education of their children and that it benefits the children when they do.

In 1965, during Head Start's first summer operation, more than 150,000 people volunteered to help set up and run the new Head Start centers across the country.<sup>12</sup> Many parents of Head Start children and other individuals were among these volunteers. This kind of social involvement by disadvantaged people leads to greater participation by groups that historically have felt powerless to influence the qualities of their lives. By encouraging parents to play a positive role in the education of their children, Head Start's parent involvement efforts help stimulate positive attitudes in both parents and children.

The parent's involvement in the program was intended to be an immediate positive influence on the children, and also a start toward teaching the parents themselves. A large number of the parents living in poverty, could not read or write. The Planning Committee felt that a parent who came to Head Start with the child and stayed might learn something about how to bring up children, about nutrition, as well as education in general. Parents who participated in Head Start were able to exercise control over their own lives by influencing decisions

---

<sup>12</sup>Jeanette Valentine and Edward Zigler, Project Head Start (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 20.

about the care of their children. Many parents gained career training and even employment. Others learned how to affect political institutions. According to the parent's own testimony, their self-esteem changed their relations to their children and their communities. The creation of strong Head Start parent organizations, as much as any of the tested or contested achievements of children, explains the powerful momentum Head Start gained when the Carter administration tried to dismantle it in 1978. Parents who might never have written a letter or made a phone call now know what to do. The disadvantaged were able to sway a congressional committee to vote against the Oval Office.



### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although parent participation in the Head Start Program was successful on the national level,<sup>13</sup> that was not the case in the Robinson Center. The main problem which the writer observed was the lack of active parent participation on the part of most of the parents whose children were enrolled in the program.

According to the Head Start Program Performance Standards Manual, the objectives of the parent involvement component of the Head Start Program are to:

(a) provide a planned program of experience and activities which support and enhance the parental role as the principle influence in their child's education and development.

(b) provide a program that recognizes the parent as:

(1) responsible guardians of their children's well-being.

(2) prime educators of their children.

(3) contributors to the Head Start Program and to their communities.

(c) provide the following kinds of opportunities for parent participation:

(1) to directly involve the parents in the decision-making process of planning and operations of the program.

---

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

(2) To have parents participate in classroom and other program activities as paid employees, volunteers, or observers.

(3) To have parents involved in activities which they helped to develop.

(4) To have parents work with their own children in cooperation with the Head Start staff.<sup>14</sup>

In the local program under analysis, the lack of parent participation occurs significantly in Education Services, a major component of the program. In accordance with the Head Start Performance Standards Manual, the educational component of the program should provide strategies for achieving the educational objectives. In doing so, it should provide for program activities that include an organized series of experiences designed to meet the individual differences and needs of participating children, the special needs of handicapped children, the needs of specific educational priorities of the local population and the community. In addition, the plan should provide methods for assisting parents in understanding and using alternative ways to foster learning and development of their children.<sup>15</sup>

The extent of parent involvement in this important process at the Robinson Center was simply limited to responses to a questionnaire in which the parents gave standard answers to the expectation of the educational service (i.e., learning to count, learning ABC's, etc.) and did not elaborate on specific needs

---

<sup>14</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Performance Standards Manual (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

and objectives of their individual child while enrolled in the program.

In accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards Manual, the education plan should indicate some of the ways parents and staff will work together to understand each child and provide for his learning experiences. The plan should indicate some of the ways parents and staff will attempt to complement each other in providing positive experiences for the child. The Head Start Program has provided ways for parent involvement in the education of their child, inside and outside of the classroom. These ways include:

(1) parent participation in planning the education program, and in center, classroom, and home program activities.

(2) parent training in activities that can be used in the home to reinforce the learning and development of their children in the center. Some examples of parent participation in this area are:

- (a) orientation and training sessions for parents,
- (b) designing activities for children at home,
- (c) participation in classroom/center activities.

(3) parent training in the observation of growth and development of their children in the home environment and identification of and handling special developmental needs.<sup>16</sup>

During the writer's participation in the program, it was quite evident that for the most part, parents were not really interested in being the primary educators of their children.

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

Most of the parents did not become involved either in the decision-making process or in the programming and planning of services to be rendered to their children. Parents, for the most part, did not participate in training sessions that would provide information or tools which they could use at home to reinforce the learning and development of their children in the center. Out of approximately sixty children who were enrolled in the Robinson Center, less than one-fourth of the parents talked to teachers and staff to inquire about activities which they could use at home to enhance their child's educational development; and only about one or two parents actually participated in the classroom/center activities.

The basic problem here is that the program was designed to achieve "maximum citizen participation" of the parents, but this did not occur. In the center in which the writer was employed, there was very little parent/citizen participation in the program.

#### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

##### A. Participation of the Poor in Community Action Programs

The Economic Act of 1964 (OEO), Title II-A, Section 202, authorized the creation of Community Action Programs (CAPS), which were to be developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served. The purpose of Title II-A, Section 202 was to stimulate local communities to take the initiative in developing programs and mobilizing their resources in a concerted and coordinated manner for a broadly based long-range attack on poverty. As a major incentive to organize these programs, communities were offered up to 90 percent federal financing for approved projects. It was however, the inclusion of the concept "maximum feasible participation" of the poor that lifted the CAP out of the traditional category of a grant-in-aid or technical assistance program and introduced a new set of political and social issues.<sup>17</sup>

In the Community Action Programs, there were four modes or levels of resident participation. The first mode of resident participation involved the process of CAP decision-making in which the poor were cast in the role of policy-makers and voting

---

<sup>17</sup> Ralph M. Kramer, Participation of the Poor (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 16.

members of the governing board of directors.

In this capacity, the representatives of the poor were regarded by OEO as essential members of a tripartite coalition, along with the major governmental and voluntary welfare agencies, and the leadership of important constituents in the community such as labor, business, religious and minority groups.<sup>18</sup>

A second mode of resident participation took place on the neighborhood level and was linked to the four modes through the elected representatives to the CAP's board of directors from the target areas. The core process was one of program development; there the poor were initially viewed primarily as consumers who could give useful advice and suggestion to those responsible for the planning and delivery of social services. Resident participation was thus seen as a means of securing reliable feedback from clientele. As members of a vast consumer panel, the poor as citizen-client had an advisory role. They were to be consulted by the institution supposed to be serving them, and it was expected that their opinions regarding program preferences and priorities would be helpful in generating new and more effective social services.

The third type of resident participation was the most radical and controversial of all, and for many persons the possibility of increasing the power of the poor was either the most objectionable or the most encouraging feature of CAP. According to this view, the poor were an underdeveloped political

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

constituency that needed stimulation and nurturing. It was assumed that the "powerlessness" of the poor perpetuated poverty, and as low-income persons were organized and mobilized as an effective pressure group could they begin to influence city hall, the schools, and the welfare and housing bureaucracies. There were, however, substantial differences in strategies aimed at increasing the involvement of the poor, ranging from self-help and cooperative efforts in the neighborhood to the use of conflict tactics in attacking the public bureaucracies and slumlords.

The fourth way in which the poor could participate was through employment as aides or in other non-professional roles, some of which were defined as "new careers" in educational, health, welfare, legal, and correctional agencies.<sup>19</sup> A double benefit was supposed to flow from the employment of poverty area personnel by delegate agencies and by the CAP itself; it could help change the individual and the agency that employed him. The indigenous staff member would learn better work habits, become motivated to improve his skills, and become an effective interpreter of the agency's policies and programs to the neighborhood. At the same time, he would bring into the agency his distinctive perspective and first-hand experiences with life in the poverty area. Presumably, this might have some influence in making the professional staff and agency more sensitive to the real needs of their clients

Of all the types of resident participation, the employment of non-professionals by delegate agencies was the one on

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

which high hopes had been pinned on its being a source of major improvement in the character of services offered the poor. As a bridge to the poor, the non-professionals were expected to educate the professionals and to improve communication between them and their clientele. At best, the non-professionals may have affected the mode of delivery of some services, making them more available.

One of the programs under the Community Action Program is the Head Start Program. One of the components of the Head Start Program is Parent Involvement. In this program, parents are involved in the decision-making process as well as learning parental skills and techniques.

#### B. Parent Participation in the Head Start Program

One of the unique and fundamental elements of Head Start since the beginning of the program in 1965 has been the broad-scale participation of parents of children enrolled in the program. This participation includes: volunteering in and learning about many components of the program (education, health, nutrition, social services, etc.); talking about and working on, at home with their own children, the same types of things that Head Start does in the classrooms and during home visits; participating with other parents in such areas as child development, child management, consumer affairs, budgeting, and arts and crafts, as well as in academic pursuits like General Education Diploma programs and enrollment in college courses.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>Jeanette Valentine and Edward Zigler, Project Head Start (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 467.



Compared with other social programs, Head Start is unique in that citizen participation through parent involvement is a cornerstone of its philosophy. Head Start is committed to the belief that the parents are the most important socializers and educators of their own children, and the program's task is to aid and support parents in carrying out these roles. In line with this, parents are encouraged to take responsibility within the program itself: working with their own children at home on activities initiated at the program; working with the children in the classrooms; and participating in decision-making functions through representation on policy-making boards.

Many parents have cited the fact that through the parent involvement component of the program, they have become more conscious of their responsibilities as parents. Their ideas were sought and were given consideration. This has led them to realize that they could and had to play the key role in the development of their children, and they acted on this realization.<sup>21</sup>

Important as the program is to the development of their children, many parents feel that the impact of Head Start on their own lives has been at least as important. Many involved mothers express the feeling that, because of their involvement in Head Start, they know more about infant and child development. They can make more informed and intelligent decisions when dealing with their children, and as a result are better mothers.

---

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid., p. 473.

Many parents, especially those from outlying, rural areas, stressed the social advantages of Head Start. The program presented opportunities for getting out of the house and interacting with other adults, sharing common experiences, releasing built-up frustrations, and just plain socializing.

Another cited benefit of the program is the opportunity to learn specific skills that parents can use in seeking employment, both within and outside of Head Start. Beginning as Head Start Parents, volunteering and going to meetings, perhaps being members of the Policy Advisory Committee, many parents have worked themselves up career ladders to positions they now occupy as Aides, Teachers, Social Workers, or Parent-involvement-Coordinators.<sup>22</sup>

For many parents, even if they are not employed by the program, Head Start does not end when their children move on to public school. They carry with them the learning and understanding they have gained through their Head Start experience. So great is the feeling of belonging and so strong is the sense of gratitude for what the program has done for them that a number of parents continue to volunteer their time, energy, and love to children currently enrolled.<sup>23</sup>

Of all the variables that educators consider in program planning as well as in the evaluation of program activities, they cannot afford to overlook the views of the parents, who are the most important educators and role-models for our

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 474.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 475.

nation's children.

### C. Parent Participation as a Factor in the Effectiveness of Head Start Programs

A major concern in education is the academic motivation of educationally deprived students in the school program. It is believed that educational attainment is closely related to the motivation of the individual and is influenced a great deal by expectancies within his home. A question that is commonly asked is: Of what value is exposure to a program if the participant does not possess the motivation and attitudes necessary for success? One pre-school program in the past has received much attention. Public interest has made it imperative that consideration be given to all factors which influence the success of Head Start. Parental participation in Head Start is one of these factors.

Frequently, the parents of these children are frustrated by the inconsistencies between their standards and those of the middle-class school. In their daily lives they often convey some of these conflicting attitudes to their children. These negative attitudes may be specifically directed toward education because of its presentation of middle-class standards, and because the teachers who present them are often resented. Identification patterns are established with adults in the family who reflect these attitudes. Such identification tends to direct motivation away from education as an important influence in these children's future.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>Gene L. Cary, "Class Socialization Patterns and Their

Many investigators in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, psychiatry, and education are concerned with the effects of parental involvement on the development of achievement motivation. Research in the area indicates that the more satisfying the relationship of the parent and child, the more likely it is that the child will realize his academic potential.<sup>25</sup>

David McClelland suspects that the motivation origin lies in the independence training stressed by the culture in which the child is brought up, emotional accompaniment and age being important aspects.<sup>26</sup> Thus, McClelland theorized that early childhood is the ideal time to form strong effective associations which are based on response from a parent in the environment. Culture, therefore, is an important influence on the intensity of motivation to achieve.<sup>27</sup>

In lower-class homes opportunities are few, although many lower-class families do understand the value of an education and are willing to spend time with their children in verbal transactions. Dialogue between parents and children is usually limited because of the adults' lack of education; consequently a

---

Relationships to Learning", School and Society, XCIV (1966), pp. 349-352.

<sup>25</sup>Betty Willman, "Parent Participation as a Factor in the Effectiveness of Head Start Programs", The Journal of Educational Research (May-June 1969), p. 407.

<sup>26</sup>David McClelland, "The Importance of Early Learning in the Formation of Motives", in Current Research in Motivation, edited by Ralph N. Haber (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 407.

qualitative deficit in cognitive capacity may result. However, the child interested in pleasing a parent who shows faith in his ability may increase motivation and thus, offset lack of early development of cognitive capacities.<sup>28</sup> Self-concept is a significant emotional factor in the development of achievement motivation. One influence upon an individual's level of aspiration is the level of the expectations which he perceives a significant other to hold for his behavior.<sup>29</sup>

Research pertinent to the social environment of culturally disadvantaged children as it affects achievement motivation implies that continuity between the home environment and the school appears to be a strong influence which affects a child's achievement in school. Thus, involvement of lower-class parents in an educational program may develop a better understanding of the school program and aid in lessening the discontinuity between the environment of the school and the home background.<sup>30</sup>

A study by Betty Willman of Florida State University, was conducted to attempt to determine the effect of parent participation in the Head Start program on student's achievement as measured by the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test during his first week of first grade. The reading readiness test was

---

<sup>28</sup>Gene L. Cary, "Class Socialization Patterns and their Relationship to Learning", School and Society, VCIV (1966), pp. 349-352.

<sup>29</sup>Robert E. Herriott, "Some Social Determinants of Educational Aspiration", Harvard Educational Review, XXXIII (1966), pp. 157-177.

<sup>30</sup>Betty Willman, "Parent Participation as a Factor in the Effectiveness of Head Start Programs", The Journal of Educational Research (May/June 1969), pp. 407-408.

selected as the criterion measure of achievement because it closely correlates with reading achievement upon which academic success depends. The hypothesis which was tested in the study hypothesized that no statistically significant difference exists between the mean reading readiness score of a group of children whose parents participated actively in a Head Start educational program and the mean reading readiness score of a group of Head Start children whose parents did not participate in the program.

The subjects involved in the experiment were 485 Black children and 56 white children of similar age, family background and environment. All subjects were in a Head Start program in Tallahassee, Florida area during the summer of 1966. The subjects' parents were divided into groups according to highly active involvement and no parent involvement or participation in the program.

Utilizing the analysis of variance technique to test for the significance of the difference between the means of the two groups, an F ratio was obtained. The F ratio was significant at the .05 level of confidence, and thus, it appears likely that parental involvement affected those pupils whose parents participated actively in a Head Start program as measured by a reading readiness test. Thus, the hypothesis is not supported.<sup>31</sup>

Specific conclusions of the study were formulated on the basis of the findings related to the testing of the hypothesis:

(1) that highly active parental involvement in a Head Start program does influence future academic achievement as

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

measured by a reading readiness test.

(2) the theory that need achievement motive if formed early in an individual's life is supported by the findings of this study relative to pre-school children.

(3) and that those parents who cared most about the Head Start program were able to communicate this and transfer educational aspiration for achievement to their children.<sup>32</sup>

From these conclusions certain implications follow:

(a) Parental involvement in an educational program for young children appears to be a factor in the future academic motivation.

(b) Anti-poverty programs concerned with upgrading the achievement of students should involve and educate parents.

(c) Many parents of culturally disadvantaged children will attend and participate in the Head Start Program if invited and encouraged.

(d) Those involved in formulating policy and executing the Head Start Program as well as local administrators and teachers should encourage parent participation and involvement in the program.<sup>33</sup>

Parents who are involved in the Head Start Program find increased self-esteem in themselves as well as in their children. In cases where the Head Start program was threatened to be abolished, parents and supporters fought to save the program.

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

D. Mississippi Replay: Head Start was  
Hit Again, but Blacks Struck Back

In February 1970, Mississippi Governor John Bell Williams vetoed some \$5 million of Head Start funds in four counties, counties whose average annual income was less than \$3,000 a year. This veto threatened to deprive 3,700 of the nation's poorest children of vitally needed food, medical, eye and dental care, supervised training and instruction, more important, love and concern.<sup>34</sup>

The governor vetoed the funds because the Head Start programs were runned primarily for Black children and he felt that the programs should be required to meet the same racial standards imposed by the courts on the Mississippi public schools. The governor bolstered the veto by pushing through the Mississippi Congress a bill setting educational requirements for Head Start teachers (i.e., Head Teachers - four year degree, Teachers - two year degree), a bill that would affect many of the program's 1,200 instructors.<sup>35</sup>

On February 28, 1970, the poor themselves - from the four counties whose funds were cut off and other threatened counties, met at the Heidelberg Hotel in Jackson, Mississippi to testify before a televised panel of prominent national civil rights leaders.

Aaron Henry, President of the state's NAACP, accused the

---

<sup>34</sup>Betsey Fancher, "Mississippi Replay: Head Start was Hit Again, but Black Struck Back", South Today (April 1970), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 3.



governor of intimidating and harassing poor white families who have tried to send their children to Head Start and challenged the governor to encourage white children to participate in these programs. Then he called upon President Nixon to stop all federal funds to Mississippi programs over which Governor Williams had control and he called upon all citizens of the state - black and white - to refuse to pay income taxes in Mississippi "until there is representation without discrimination."<sup>36</sup>

Eva Hooks of Hinds County - one of the four counties in which funds were cut - Head Start Program states that the city police actively interfered with her recruitment activities of whites and intimidated whites who might possibly attend the programs or be eligible for them.<sup>37</sup>

Head Start had become a symbol of black emergence in Mississippi, and inherent in the testimony of every delegate was the new sense of dignity and human worth which they had forged out of the successes and struggles of the program.

As the afternoon of February 28, 1970 wore on, it became increasingly apparent that the poor would resort to violence to protect their children's program. Parents and civil rights leaders began boycotting the Governor's mansion.

Meanwhile, Head Start went on, but the Head Start Programs felt the economic impact of the governor's veto. On March 5, 1970, Eva Hooks stated that there had not been one payday since

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

December 17, 1969. Seventy-five to eighty percent of mothers were heads of their house. They had their lights, their gas and their water taken out, and had to go back on welfare.<sup>38</sup>

Local black doctors contributed health services to the Head Start children. Head Start was operating on a voluntary basis supported by the community.

Blacks continued to picket the Governor's mansion. The picket lines were reinforced by delegations of other Head Start parents and volunteers from other counties. As time passed, the children had been taken out of school to picket.

Dr. Aaron Shirley, head of Mississippi Coalition to Save Head Start, had gone to Washington, D.C. to make a direct appeal to the H.E.W. Secretary, Robert Finch for help to save the Head Start Program; Frank Parker, attorney for the Commiteee for Civil Rights Under Law, prepared an injunction against the governor's veto.<sup>39</sup>

On March 10, 1970, H.E.W. Secretary Robert Finch overrode Governor Williams' veto of Head Start grants in the four counties; Governor Williams had already waived the veto in one county.

Finch stated:

We found that the programs are fully consistent with President Nixon's emphasis on early childhood development, and with the intent of the Economic Opportunity Act, under which the programs were funded. These programs are essential if we are to achieve these objectives.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

The Washington Post theorized that overriding Williams' veto, President Nixon was backing James Farmer of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who made it clear that he would consider resigning over the Head Start issue. The decision was seen as the most significant victory for the former head of CORE since he joined Nixon's administration as an Assistant H.E.W. Secretary for Administration and Child Development, including Head Start.<sup>41</sup>

Sociologists maintain that the search for a sense of community is one of man's basic goals and one in which he is finding it increasingly difficult to fulfill. When people feel that they cannot participate in community programs in significant ways, they feel alienated from the community programs and are less likely to participate in the programs since the programs were designed for the community, but without the community participation on the planning level. In the Head Start program, attempts have been made to alleviate the problem of lack of community participation in the planning and the decision-making process of community oriented programs. In 1970, the Head Start Program initiated a new method that would help local staff and parents plan their own program. The method was entitled the Enabler Model.

E. The Enabler Model: Local Head Start  
Staff and Parents Plan their Own Program

In the Spring of 1970, the Office of Child Development decided to teach a new kind of early childhood model as part of

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

the Planned Variation Program, which was one of the more than twenty-five alternative curriculum models developed by colleges and universities, regional education laboratories, and other researchers.<sup>42</sup> This model was initiated within the framework of the education component of Project Head Start.

This new model was called the Enabler Model which, instead of offering a community a pre-determined curriculum to be applied in its Head Start project, it would focus on helping local Head Start staff and parents plan and conduct a program of their own choosing, through supportive assistance of an early childhood education specialist - the Enabler.

Each person serving as Enablers in these projects has worked in a variety of settings in Head Start and other pre-school programs, has an advanced degree in early childhood education, and can draw on many years of experience in working with young children.<sup>43</sup> In each project, the Enabler provides regular on-site support, guidance and any other assistance a community needs to implement its program, through regular monthly visits.

The model was developed with three major principles in mind. Each principle bears on the role the Enabler should play:

- (1) Support and guidance should be directed toward helping the community achieve its own goals and purposes.
- (2) Assistance should be offered in a manner designed

---

<sup>42</sup>Lilian G. Katz, Helping Local Head Start Staff and Parents Plan their Own Program: The Enabler Model", Children Today (November/December 1972), p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

to encourage and enable local leaders and participants in the program to discover and develop their own strengths and talents to solve problems on their own

- (3) Local staff members and parents should be helped to develop relationships to local resources and agencies.<sup>44</sup>

The practice of telling people what to do encourages local centers to depend on outside expertise for their learning. Such a pattern of dependency may rob parents and staff of the opportunity to discover and develop their own talents and potential. The more often community leaders are persuaded to accept a pre-determined program, the less often they reach down into their own resources to strengthen their understanding and skills. Helping local program people to achieve their own purposes, rather than imposing pre-specified curriculum objectives, stems from yet another related assumption - the need for mutual respect between the local program planners and doers and the outside experts.

During the initial period of the Enabler's work, he or she meets with all community groups involved in the program. These groups include Head Start staff, volunteers and parents; social, medical, and nutritional workers; public school personnel; and CAP and neighborhood representatives.<sup>45</sup>

In the course of these informal and semi-formal discussions, the Enabler encourages and facilitates expression of the goals and purposes of everyone involved. When necessary, he or she helps local groups clarify goals and reconcile those which

---

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

tend to be conflicting or incompatible. During the discussions, the Enabler helps participants consider the wide range of problems involved in implementing a program including the sharing of responsibility for personnel practices and staff structure. Once sense of direction and some basic intentions are spelled out, the Enabler's role shifts toward one of helping the local group realize its goals.

For the early childhood specialist serving an enabling role, the point of entry is the quality of the day-to-day experiences provided for the children. It is the events in the classroom which provide the heartbeat and blood pressure readings in this clinical approach. Helping maintain a "healthy" program may mean sharing information, demonstrating techniques, locating other specialists, interpreting source of conflict and reconciling differences among adults. It may also mean helping teachers deepen their understanding of how children grow and sometimes, helping administrators understand what teachers need and how their growth is enhanced. It is the Enabler who draws upon the knowledge of all specialists to improve the quality of the children's daily experiences.

## V. ANALYTICAL APPROACH

In an attempt to ascertain the reasons for lack of parent participation in the Robinson Center Head Start Program, the writer used the Exploratory Research method. This type of research makes the researcher more familiar with the topic to be studied. Exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes: (1) simply to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding, (2) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study, and (3) to develop the methods to be employed in a more careful study.<sup>46</sup>

The writer selected this study to determine whether or not lack of parent participation is a problem only in the center in which the writer was employed (Robinson Center) or whether this problem also exists in other centers within the Atlanta metropolitan area. The writer engaged in a comparative analysis of parent participation in the Robinson Center and two other centers of similar size within the Atlanta Area (i.e., the Grady Homes Center and the English Avenue Center).

Some of the areas that the writer focused on in order to attempt to determine the cause or causes of lack of parent participation are:

- (1) the extent to which the staff at each center is

---

<sup>46</sup>Earl R. Babbie, The Practice of Social Research (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1979), p. 84.

informing the parents that they should or can participate in the development of the education plan for their children.

(2) the extent to which there is a commitment on the part of the staff at each center to encourage parent participation in the program. The writer also attempted to find out:

- (a) were invitations extended to the parents to attend classes with their children.
- (b) were invitations extended to the parents to attend seminars or workshops given by the center in order to increase the parent's knowledge of parenting skills and learning experiences for their children.

(3) the extent to which parents feel that their participation in the program will have a positive effect on their children and their own lives.

The primary data collection technique utilized in obtaining information for this study was interviewing. The persons that were interviewed were: (1) the Director of the Head Start Program in the Atlanta metropolitan area, (2) the Directors of the three centers involved in the study, and (3) the Parent Involvement/Volunteer Coordinator, as well as a random sample of the parents of children enrolled in the Head Start centers (i.e., Robinson Center, Grady Homes Center, and the English Avenue Center; see Appendix A for questionnaire). The centers (Grady Homes and English Avenue) were chosen to be compared to the Robinson Center because all three centers are within the Atlanta city limits and are easily accessible to by public transportation.

The sample for distribution of the questionnaire was selected by picking up every fourth name from the register of pupils at each center until a total of twenty persons from each



center was selected.

## VI. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

During the survey, the writer attempted to ascertain the extent to which the objectives of the Parent Involvement/Volunteer Component (see Appendix B) of the Head Start Program are being met.

The first objective of this component of the program is to involve one thousand three hundred and forty (1,340) parents in the program, five hundred (500) of whom will be involved in the decision-making process of the total program. According to Ms. Helen Wingfield, Parent Involvement/Volunteer Coordinator for the Head Start Program, this goal has been achieved. Although the Coordinator maintains that they have met their stated goals, the response from the Head Start parents during the survey indicate that "maximum citizen participation is not being achieved in this program.

Ms. Wingfield states that one thousand three hundred forty-six (1,346) parents have expressed the desire to participate in the program. The five hundred (500) parents targeted for involvement in the decision-making process are divided into three committees: The Center Policy Committee, the Center Committee, and the Central Policy Council. The Center Policy Committee is a delegate committee of parents from twelve centers who have children enrolled in the program. This committee voices its concern about issues and/or problems that may occur in the center

in which the child is enrolled. The Center Committees are composed of parents within each individual center who have children enrolled in the program. Within each center, parents get together and select officers for their respective committees. The parents also elect two from among themselves (one representative and one alternative) to represent their center on the Central Policy Council. Nine parent meetings are held yearly to keep the parents actively involved.

The Central Policy Council is composed of 50 percent of the parents (one representative from each of the Head Start Centers) and 50 percent of staff members - twelve staff members from the agency. This committee sets policies that are to be carried out in all of the Atlanta area Head Start Centers.

Each center has sub-committees in which the parents are expected to be thoroughly involved in. Each sub-committee is composed of three to five parents. The sub-committees are:

(1) Personnel and Grievance Committee

- (a) This committee hears complaints from the parents and/or community residents concerning the Head Start Program and/or Center operations and, along with the Head Teacher, attempts to resolve these complaints.
- (b) The Committee, the Center Director, and the Education Supervisor interview and recommend persons to be hired to fill vacancies in the centers. The Committee makes its recommendation to the Central Policy Council and Head Start Director for final approval.

(2) Program and Planning Committee: This committee works on program changes in the operation of the center and plans activities for parents and/or children at the center.

- (3) Screening Committee: This committee reviews the pre-registration forms of families desiring to enroll their children in the program. The committee works with a staff member from the center in selecting children most in need of the service.
- (4) Finance Committee: This committee approves expenditures of the Center Parent Committee.
- (5) Newsletter Committee: This committee solicits articles on events and subjects of interest to parents from parents and staff members. They then select articles for a newsletter that is distributed monthly.
- (6) By-laws Committee: This committee is responsible for considering revisions to the Center Committee's laws (see Appendix C).

Based upon responses from the parents during the survey who stated that they had participated in center activities, there was little parent participation on these committees.

The second objective of the Parent Involvement/Volunteer Component's goal is to provide opportunities for five hundred (500) parents to participate in designing the training program for the 1983-1984 school year.

According to Ms. Wingfield, this goal has been achieved because the agency has already recruited five hundred (500) parents to participate in decision-making processes;<sup>47</sup> however, the mere recruitment of five hundred (500) parents does not necessarily mean that they will participate. Ms. Wingfield states

---

<sup>47</sup>Helen Wingfield, private interview at the headquarters of the Atlanta Head Start Program, Atlanta, Georgia, August 1983.

that some of the programs are designed by parents and approved by staff members. The programs include: parent orientation; Sub-committee for Education Component; health; nutrition; special activities for parents at the center level; and they also discuss and plan any activities to be carried out by the Central Policy Committee.<sup>48</sup> Directors of the centers and the staff members of the agency as a whole, provide technical assistance to the parents in designing these programs.

Parents also attend regional, state, and national Head Start Program Conferences. In the school year 1982-1983, eight (8) parents attended the regional Parent Head Start Association Conference in Fort Valley, Georgia; thirty-five (35) parents attended a three-day Parent Head Start State Conference in Saint Simons Island, Georgia; and one parent and one community representative attended the Parent Head Start National Conference which is held in different states annually.<sup>49</sup>

As for recruitment of one hundred (100) parents for special training in classroom procedures to enable them to better assist teachers, this goal has not been met. The classes are offered three times a year and usually, an average of twenty (20) parents enroll in the class each time the class is given, falling short of their goal by forty (40) parents.<sup>50</sup>

The recruitment of one hundred (100) parents for test readiness classes (prepare parents to teach children) and

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Graduate Equivalency Diploma classes has not been achieved either. In the last school year, 1982-1983, only five parents had enrolled in both classes, falling short of their goal by ninety-five (95) parents. The classes are given as the need arises. Most parents lack motivation to get involved in the classes. They usually make a verbal commitment to do so, but never follow through.<sup>51</sup>

The third component objective of the program is to increase the number of volunteers in the program by one hundred (100) people by recruiting them through volunteer referrals and through developing close contact with volunteer agencies. According to Ms. Wingfield, this objective has been achieved. This objective was achieved by having parents who enrolled their children in the Head Start Program merely fill out forms indicating their interest in participating in the program and in what areas of the program they would like to participate (see Appendix D). All volunteers are trained in the areas of their interest (see Appendix E). The volunteer agencies that the Head Start Program has developed ties with are: The United Way, Atlanta public schools, community churches, community social agencies, Atlanta area colleges and universities, Atlanta Fire and Police Departments, and Georgia Department of Human Services.<sup>52</sup>

The centers have instituted a Volunteer Recognition Program whereby volunteers are recognized on a monthly basis by

---

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

receiving a certificate. Recognition of volunteers is based upon their service in different categories. The categories are: number of hours volunteers have rendered; longevity; outstanding work; classroom participation; and field trip attendance (see Appendix F). Annually, a banquet is hosted by the agency to recognize volunteers from all of the centers with the most contributions to the program.

It is important to note that the number of volunteer hours rendered by all volunteers are matched by the federal government at the minimum hourly wage rate of \$3.35.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

## VII. ANALYSIS OF THREE HEAD START CENTERS

In this section, the writer analyzed the responses of the parents from the three centers together in order to give a general overall view of the level of parent participation in these three centers. In addition, the responses from the survey of each center are analyzed separately to show which center has the highest parent participation in the program and more specifically, to show which particular activities the parents participated actively in within the three centers.

The responses from the survey in which sixty (60) Head Start Program parents participated, twenty (20) from each of the three centers, is presented below. Out of a total of sixty (60) parents:

(1) fifty-nine percent (59%) stated that they had participated in at least one of the center's activities. These activities included sitting in the classrooms and helping out as a teacher's aide; attending parent meetings; going on field trips with the children; and doing whatever they are asked to do.

(2) forty-nine percent (49%) of the parents stated that they were encouraged by staff to participate in screening applicants for admission into the program; while fifty-one percent (51%) stated that they were not aware that they could have an opportunity to participate in screening applicants for admission to the program.



(3) only thirty percent (30%) of the parents knew that parents had an opportunity to sit on a committee that screened Head Start parent applicants for employment with the agency. None of the parents surveyed indicated that they had actually sat on a committee which interviewed parents for employment with the agency.

(4) ninety-four percent (94%) of the parents indicated that they were invited by the staff to participate in the classroom with their children.

(5) ninety-four percent (94%) of the parents indicated that written information was given to them regarding parent participation in the program.

(6) ninety-four percent (94%) of the parents also indicated that they were invited by staff to accompany their children on field trips, but few ever participated in this activity.

(7) eighty-three percent (83%) of the parents stated that they were aware that seminars and workshops are given for parents to increase their knowledge of parenting skills. Only forty-one percent (41%) stated that they had attended at least one of these workshops/seminars, while the other fifty-nine percent (59%) gave no reason for not attending.

(8) eighty-six percent (86%) of the parents feel that their participation in the program would make a difference in their children's learning experience. They stated that the positive impact on their children's learning experience due to their participation are: the parents become role models for the children; parents learn teaching skills to do at home; and parents

also learn better parenting skills. Although eighty-six percent (86%) of the parents feel that their participation in the program would make a difference in their children's learning experience, only fifty-nine percent (59%) of the parents actually participated in the program. Some parents stated that their lack of participation in the program is due to conflict in the schedules of the center's activities and their own job schedules and also, lack of transportation to the centers.

(9) seventy-two percent (72%) of the parents surveyed stated that they felt their participation in the program would and does make a difference in their families. The parents who participated in the program felt that they can communicate better with their children and that they can use the same discipline patterns at home that are used in the centers.

(10) eighty-two percent (82%) of the parents who participated in the program stated that they have observed improvements in their family life as a result of their participation in the program. These improvements include: learning to make educational toys instead of buying them; learning to chastise children in better ways; children learn to communicate with parents; children's socialization skills increase; children's speaking abilities improve; as well as improvement in parenting skills.

#### B. Analysis of Responses from Twenty (20) Parents Whose Children Attend the Robinson Center

(1) Fifty-five percent (55%) of the parents surveyed stated that they had participated in at least one of the center

activities.

(2) Only twenty-five percent (25%) of the parents stated that they were aware of the fact that they could participate in screening Head Start applicants for admission to the program.

(3) Only fourteen percent (14%) of the parents were aware that parents could participate in screening Head Start parent applicants for possible employment with the agency.

(4) All of the parents (100%) stated that they were invited by the staff to participate in the classroom activities with their children.

(5) All of the parents (100%) stated that they were invited by the staff to accompany their children on field trips.

(6) All of the parents (100%) stated that written information was given to them regarding parent participation in the program.

(7) One hundred percent (100%) of the parents stated that they were aware that seminars and workshops were given for parents to increase their knowledge of parenting skills. Fifty-percent (50%) of these parents stated that they had attended at least one workshop or seminar. The other fifty percent (50%) gave no reason for not attending the workshops or seminars.

(8) Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the parents surveyed stated that they felt that their participation in the program would make a difference in their children's learning experience. Although seventy-eight percent (78%) of the parents indicated that they felt their participation would make a difference in

their children's learning experience; only fifty-five percent (55%) of the parents actually participated in the program. Most of the parents of this center gave no specific reasons for their non-participation. Most of the parents surveyed at this center are less educated than parents from other centers.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the writer surmises that their non-participation is due to the parents feeling that they cannot make a significant contribution to the program due to their lack of educational skills. Other parents stated that their lack of participation in the program is due to their inability to adjust their work schedule to attend activities at the center.

(9) Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the parents stated that they felt their participation in the program would not only make a difference in their children's learning experience, but also in their family life in general.

(10) Eighty percent (80%) of the parents who participated in the program stated that they have observed improvements in their family life as a result of their participation in the program.

Most of the parents from this center that were surveyed are young and lack a high school education. Most of the parents did not understand the questions asked by the writer. When the writer tried to explain the questions to them it appeared that some of the parents still did not understand, but answered the questions with a yes or no answer without giving further

---

<sup>54</sup>Information extracted from enrollment forms used to enroll children into the Head Start Program.

explanations.

It is significant to note that approximately all of the "young" parents who had children enrolled in the program lived with their mothers (extended families). The grandparents who lived in the same household appeared to be the main authority figures in the households.

In comparison to the other two centers, the amount of encouragement given to the parents by the staff to participate in screening applicants for admission to the program was the lowest (25%). On the other hand, the number of parents that were aware of the availability of seminars and workshops given for parents to increase their parenting skills was the highest (100%), although overall participation by parents in the center's activities is equaled to the Grady Homes Center as being the lowest.

C. Analysis of Responses from Twenty (20) Parents  
Whose Children Attended the Grady Homes Center

(1) Fifty-five percent (55%) of the parents surveyed stated that they had participated in at least one of the center's activities.

(2) Fifty-five percent (55%) of the parents also stated that they were aware of the fact they could participate in screening Head Start applicants for admission to the program.

(3) Only eleven percent (11%) of the parents were aware that parents could participate in screening Head Start parent applicants for possible employment with the agency.

(4) All of the parents (100%) stated that they were

invited by the staff to participate in the classroom with their children.

(5) All of the parents (100%) indicated that they were invited by the staff to accompany their children on the center's field trips.

(6) One hundred percent (100%) of the parents indicated that written information was given to them regarding parent participation in the program.

(7) Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the parents stated that they were aware that seminars and workshops were available to parents to increase their knowledge of parenting skills, but only fourteen percent (14%) indicated that they had attended at least one seminar or workshop. The remainder of the parents gave no reasons for not attending these seminars or workshops.

(8) All of the parents (100%) stated that they felt that their participation in the program would make a difference in their children's learning experience. In spite of this statement, only fifty-five percent (55%) of the parents surveyed had actually participated in the program. Most of the parents stated that their non-participation in the program was primarily due to the lack of transportation to the center.

(9) Seventy percent (70%) of the parents felt that their participation in the program would make a difference in their children's learning experience and in their family life in general.

(10) Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the parents who participated in the program stated that they had observed

improvements in their family life as a result of their participation in the Head Start Program.

While conducting the survey, it became evident that parents who lived in walking distance of the center were more involved in the program than those parents who lived further away from the center. In addition, those parents whose lives seemed more organized and who were sober during the interview participated more in the center's activities. On the other hand, parents who appeared intoxicated during the interview appeared to have a nonchalant attitude toward the Head Start Program. These parents did not feel that their participation in the program would have a positive impact on their children's learning experiences or on their family life in general. This is indicated by their non-participation in the program and the lack of understanding of one of the primary goals of the Head Start Program, which is to help break the poverty cycle and to help the family improve their self-esteem.

Compared to the other two centers, parent participation in this center's activities was the highest (67%). On the other hand, parent awareness of the availability of seminars and workshops for parents to increase their parenting skills was the lowest (60%).

#### D. Analysis of Responses from Twenty (20) Parents Whose Children Attended the English Avenue Center

(1) Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the parents surveyed stated that they have participated in at least one of the center's activities.

(2) Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the parents indicated that they were encouraged by the staff to participate in screening applicants for admission to the program.

(3) Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the parents also indicated that they were aware that they could participate in screening Head Start parent applicants for possible employment with the agency when jobs are available.

(4) Eighty-three percent (83%) of the parents stated that they were invited by the staff to participate in the classroom with their children.

(5) Eighty-three percent (83%) of the parents stated that they were invited by the staff to accompany their children on the center's field trips.

(6) Eighty-three percent (83%) of the parents stated that they had been given written information by the staff regarding parent participation in the program.

(7) Only sixty percent (60%) of the parents surveyed indicated that they were aware that seminars and workshops were given for parents to increase their knowledge and parenting skills. Of the sixty percent (60%) that were aware of the seminars and workshops, all of the parents stated that they had attended at least one seminar or workshop.

(8) Eighty percent (80%) of the parents felt that their participation in the program would make a difference in their child's learning experience. Although eighty percent (80%) of the parents indicated that they felt their participation would make a difference in their child's learning experience, only



sixty-seven percent (67%) of the parents actually participated in the program. The parents stated that their lack of participation was largely due to lack of transportation to the center.

(9) Eighty percent (80%) of the parents who participated in the program stated that they have observed improvements in their family life as a result of their participation in the program.

Most of the parents surveyed from the English Avenue Center appeared uninterested in the Head Start Program. Some of the parents whose children used to attend the Harris Homes Center, which is now closed and whose children have been transferred to the English Avenue Center, do not even know where the center is located, therefore, they do not know exactly where their children attend school.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to lacking interest in the program, some of the parents appeared to lack motivation and have no sense of direction in life. Many of the parents surveyed were young parents who had dropped out of high school and were not employed.<sup>56</sup>

In comparison to the other two centers, the number of parents that were aware that parents could participate in screening Head Start parent applicants for possible employment with the agency was the lowest (11%). On the other hand, the number of parents that felt that their participation in the

---

<sup>55</sup>Odessa Alexander, private interview held at the English Avenue Head Start Center, Atlanta, Georgia, May 1983.

<sup>56</sup>Information extracted from enrollment forms used to enroll children into the Head Start Program.

program would make a difference in their children's learning experience was the highest (100%), although only fifty-five percent (55%) participated in the program.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Although the participation of parents in the Head Start Program is very crucial to its success, this study revealed that parent participation in the activities of the three centers under study namely, the Robinson Center, the English Avenue Center, and the Grady Homes Center was marginal. On the other hand, the staff members at these centers discharged their respective duties in a manner that encouraged maximum parent participation in the program activities.

In the main, the reasons for lack of parent participation in the program are lack of interest, conflict in the schedules of the center's activities and their own job schedules, lack of transportation to the centers, and feeling as though they cannot make a significant contribution to the program.

The most significant reason for lack of parent participation in the program appears to be lack of transportation to the centers. The level of parent participation in the centers would increase if each center were able to provide transportation to and from the centers for the parents; but due to continuous budget cuts over the years, the program cannot afford to provide transportation for the parents to be involved in the centers' activities.

For the parents who are not within walking distance to the centers and who cannot afford public transportation to attend the centers' activities, their interest in the program has waned, therefore, they cannot take advantage of the opportunities to build their self-esteem, to improve the relationship between themselves and their children, or to learn better parenting skills.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff of the Head Start Program appears to be doing their job fairly well, as far as encouraging the parents to participate in all aspects of the program, but more could be done. The following are recommendations, which when instituted, will motivate the parents to become active participants in the program.

(1) More emphasis should be placed on getting parents involved in the test readiness classes and especially, the Graduate Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) classes. Many parents do not read the written material given to them because they cannot read or understand the material. Also, the test readiness classes would help the parents establish better communication and an improved positive relationship with their children.

(2) More emphasis should be placed on increasing the number of volunteers working at the agency and/or increasing the number of volunteer hours rendered, since the number of hours rendered is matched by the federal government at the hourly wage rate of \$3.35. In the interview with Helen Wingfield, she stated that there were only two people, including herself, working in the Parent Involvement Component of the program. Ms. Wingfield states that she needs at least two more employees.

If the agency could raise the amount of volunteer hours

significantly, this would mean more matched dollars from the federal government. This additional revenue could help pay for additional staff members for this component. These additional staff members could follow-up on parents, either through telephone contacts or home visits, to keep the parents involved in the program and to enlighten them about the benefits that can be gained from the program. The additional money could also be used to help transport parents to and from the centers in order to increase their participation in the program.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you participate in any of the center's activities?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what activities? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you aware that parents are encouraged to participate in screening applicants for admission to the program? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_
3. Are you aware that parents are encouraged to participate in screening applicants for possible employment? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. Were you invited by the staff to participate in the classroom with your child? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. Were you invited by the staff to accompany your child on field trips? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
6. Was written information given to you regarding parent participation in the program? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you aware that seminars and workshops are given for parents to increase their knowledge of parenting skills? Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_. If Yes, do you attend? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_. If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you feel that your participation in the program will make a difference in your child's learning experience? Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
If Yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_  
If No, why not? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you feel that your participation in the program will make a difference in your family life (improving parenting skills)? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_. If No. why not? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Have you seen any improvement in your family life as a result of your participation in the Head Start Program? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_  
If Yes, what are the improvements? \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX B

PARENT TRAINING FOR 1983-1984

## PARENT TRAINING FOR 1983-1984

Based on the Performance Standards and the Head Start Social Services, Parent Involvement Guide, dated 11-9-82, the following training is planned:

- 1304.5-4 I. Staff Orientation 1304.5-4
- 1304.5-1 (a) II. Parent Orientation 1304.5-4
- 1304.5-3 (a) III. Officers Training and decision making .130
- 1304.5-2 (a) IV. 70.2
- 1304.4-3(e&f)F. Consumer Education
- 1304.3 (g) VI. Parent/Staff Communications
- 1304.5-2 (h) VII. How to effectively use volunteers
- 1304.5-5 (I) VIII. Performance standards parent and staff
- IX. Advocacy - To be scheduled with Social Services
- 1304.4-4 (e) X. Crisis Intervention - To be scheduled with Social Services
- 1304.5-3 (b) XI. Exploring parenting

### OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide staff orientation of parents with children currently enrolled in the program.
  - a. Each component will be asked to provide a resource person to explain the performance Standards of their area of staff.
  - b. Answer question for staff in reference to their function and ways of interacting with parents.
2. To provide orientation to parents of Head Start Children currently enrolled in the program.
  - a. Each component will be asked to provide a resource person and handouts to explain their component area.
  - b. Welcome letter from each component head and the program director
  - c. Folders to include:
    1. Parent Involvement Handbook
    2. Volunteer Handbook (Parent Involvement)
    3. Resource Handbook (Social Services)
    4. Policy and Procedure Handbook

5. Performance Standards from all areas of Child Development
  6. Laws and guidelines for Special Education recipients
  7. Immunization requirements (Health)
  8. Other pertinent materials from each component
  9. Scratch paper and pencils.
3. To provide parliamentary procedure with training and decision making techniques to all parents in cluster setting.
    - a. Roberts Rule of Order
    - b. How to conduct a meeting
    - c. Review film on "Conducting a Meeting"
  4. To provide training on 70.2
    - a. Parent Handbook
    - b. Performance Standards
  5. To provide consumer education for parents.
    - a. Best toys buys and toy safety
    - b. Stretching your food dollar
    - c. Dressing successfully on a limited budget
    - d. Energy Conservation
  6. To provide parents and staff the opportunity to effectively communicate through:
    - a. General Rap session
    - b. Questions to parents by staff
    - c. Questions to staff by parents
    - d. General concensus by both groups
  7. To provide staff information on how to effectively use volunteers
    - a. Planning
    - b. Job descriptions (Hand-Out)
    - c. Purpose of volunteers (Hand-Out)
    - d. Importance of volunteers
  8. To provide parents and staff with knowledge of the Performance Standards and their relations.
    - a. All component heads or a service provider will fully explain their individual areas of the Performance Standards.
    - b. Provide copies of the individual areas of the performance standards to parents and staff.

9. To provide training to parents that will help them to deal with different stages of child behavior.
  - a. Films
  - b. Records
  - c. Work books

To add to those trainings outlined above, we will also be conducting workshops with the Health, Education, and Special Education Components in carrying out other workshops. We will include on our calendar:

- a. Quarterly newsletter
- b. T/A center directors in any areas of need
- c. Craft workshop for parents on inexpensive gifts for holidays
- d. Installation ceremonies of Center Committee and Central Policy Council officers
- e. Plan parenthood for mothers and fathers
- f. Developing positive mental attitudes about self
- g. Provide parents information on educational courses which will enhance their chances for employment
- h. Increase volunteers in all phases of the program

Fund Raising proceeds for Central Policy Council and sales noted. Some of the funds were used to purchase "tee shirts". The Policy Council voted to purchase 50 tee shirts, to be sold at \$7.00 each.

The proceeds are to go into their account to be used during the 1983-84 school year. The members of the council have set their fund raising goal at \$1,000.00 to begin the new year. They will continue to have fund raising activities during the summer months.

Because we have not received enough contributions for "The Price Is Right" fun activity, we have decided to continue our solicitation for additional items. The decision was based on twenty-eight out-going correspondences and we received back only three (3) acknowledgements. The three (3) responses gave us a total of \$145.98.

Exploring parenting will be completed in Rockdale Home Base next. Upon completion of this training, we would have covered all aspects of training as required by the Performance Standards.

APPENDIX C

SUB-COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS FOR HEAD START  
CENTER COMMITTEES

SUB-COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS FOR HEAD  
START CENTER COMMITTEES

PERSONNEL AND GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

This committee serves two important functions for the Center Committee.

(1) The committee is to hear complaints from the parents and/or community residents, concerning the Head Start Program and/or center operations and along with the head teacher attempt to resolve these complaints. However, if they cannot be resolved at the center level, the complaint and reasons for not resolving it are submitted to the CPC for final resolution.

(2) The Committee, the Center Head and Education supervisor will interview and recommend persons to be hired to fill vacancies in the centers. They will make their recommendations to the CPC and Head Start Director for final approval.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee is to approve expenditures of the Center Parent Committee. The Treasurer is automatically a member of this committee.

PROGRAM AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Program and Planning Committee is to work on program changes in the operation of the center and plan activities for parents and/or children at the center.

SCREENING COMMITTEE

The Screening Committee is to review the pre-registration forms of families desiring to enroll their children in the program. The Committee works with a staff member from the center in selecting children most in need of the service.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

The Newsletter Committee will solicit from parents or staff members articles on events and subjects of interest to parents. They will select articles for the newsletter and with staff assistance, see that it is printed and distributed monthly.

BY-LAWS COMMITTEE

The By-Laws Committee will be responsible for considering revisions to the Center Committee By-Laws and recommending any necessary revisions to the Center Committee.

The Chairman may select or ask for volunteers for any other special committees as the need arises.

Each committee shall be composed of from 3-5 people.

APPENDIX D

PARENT INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PARENT INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Center \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

2. I am presently active in the following organizations:

Church \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Organizations \_\_\_\_\_

Schools \_\_\_\_\_ Recreational Activities \_\_\_\_\_

Clubs \_\_\_\_\_

3. My Hobbies are \_\_\_\_\_

4. I am interested in participating in Head Start through:

Volunteering in classroom \_\_\_\_\_

Serving on committees \_\_\_\_\_

Attending parent meetings \_\_\_\_\_

Going on field trips \_\_\_\_\_

Attending parent workshops \_\_\_\_\_

Or \_\_\_\_\_

5. The office I would like to hold is

Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ CNAC Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Asst. Sec. \_\_\_\_\_ Vice Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

CPC Representative \_\_\_\_\_

6. The committee I would like to serve on:

Education \_\_\_\_\_ Personnel & Grievance \_\_\_\_\_ By-Laws \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ Screening \_\_\_\_\_

7. I would like to see workshops or classes for parents on the following topics this year.

GED \_\_\_\_\_ NUTRITION \_\_\_\_\_ CONSUMER EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_ CHILD DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

SEWING \_\_\_\_\_ ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN \_\_\_\_\_ CRAFTS \_\_\_\_\_ EXERCISE \_\_\_\_\_

SOCIAL ISSUES \_\_\_\_\_ WEIGHT REDUCTION \_\_\_\_\_ JOB PREPARATION \_\_\_\_\_

HANDICAPPED CHILDREN \_\_\_\_\_ RAP SESSIONS \_\_\_\_\_ SOCIAL SERVICES \_\_\_\_\_

SEX EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_ HEAD START POLICIES AND PROGRAMS \_\_\_\_\_



8. The best time for me to visit the center is:

Day(s) of week \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

## JOB DESCRIPTION FOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

TYPE OF WORK: Clerical Assistant

BACKGROUND: Maintaining accurate, complete and current records for each center and each individual student is a major responsibility of each clerk typist. A volunteer clerical assistant may provide much needed support.

PLACE OF WORK: Head Start's Central Office or one of the Economic Opportunity Atlanta Child Development Head Start Centers.

DURATION OF JOB: Two hours per week for a minimum of three months.

DUTIES OF JOB: Work under the direction and in cooperation with the assigned secretary and or Center head teacher. Generally, the assignment will include one or more of the following tasks:

1. Assisting with telephones by taking messages when necessary, placing calls when directed, checking attendance.
2. Assisting with filing (except for confidential material).
3. Operating duplicating equipment.
4. Typing forms, letters, notices, etc.
5. Addressing envelopes, message notices, etc.
6. Sorting, stamping, and opening mail.
7. Helping with inventory of supplies.

TRAINING PROVIDED: Pre-service and inservice training will be provided.

HOURS: Any two hours in which the center is open.

VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS: Accuracy; tact, discretion and good judgement; ability to use transcribing equipment; emotionally mature person who is able to follow directions with a cooperative attitude.

CONTRIBUTION: Enable secretary to assist in more tasks which in turn will allow staff and coordinators time for administrative and/or supervisory duties.

APPENDIX E  
CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

# Economic Opportunity Atlanta Inc.

## Child Development Program

Presents

This Certificate of Appreciation

To \_\_\_\_\_

For dedicated service to the Atlanta Head Start

Central Policy Council.

Your participation has been an asset to our program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Project Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Involvement Coordinator

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdrew, Pearl. "Parent Involvement: A Key to Success", Children Today. (January-February, 1981):21-23.
- Babbie, Earl R. The Practice of Social Research. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1979.
- Carly, Gene L. "Class Socialization Patterns and their Relationship to Learning", School and Society, XCIV (1966): 349-352.
- Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Head Start Program - Parent Involvement. "Management by Objectives", Annual Program Report. Fiscal Year 1983-1984.
- Epps, Frances; Riley, M. J; and Clara, M.D. Head Start in Action. West Nyack, N. Y.: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1967.
- Fancher, Betsey. "Mississippi Replay: Head Start was Hit Again, But Blacks Struck Back", South Today (April 1970).
- Herriott, Robert E. "Some Social Determinants of Educational Aspiration", Harvard Educational Review, XXXIII (1966): 157-177.
- Honig, Alice S. "Parent Involvement in Childhood Education". National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, D.C.: 1975.
- Katz, Lilian G. "Helping Local Head Start Staff and Parents Plan their Own Program: The Enabler Model", Children Today (November-December 1972).
- Karmer, Ralph M. Participation of the Poor. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Makins, Virginia. "Head Start: Alive, Well, and Kicking", Times Educational Supplement (March 17, 1978).
- McClelland, David. "The Importance of Early Learning in the Formation of Motives", Current Research in Motivation. Edited by Ralph N. Haber. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966.

Moynihan, Daniel P. Maximum Feasible Misunderstandings. New York: The Free Press, 1970.

Ross, Catherine J.; Valentine, Jeanette; and Zigler, Edward. "Project Head Start", Children Today (May-June, 1980).

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Youth and the War on Poverty, 1966. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development. Project Head Start, December, 1970. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office,

United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Head Start: A Child Development, October 1970. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970.

United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Development Services Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Head Start Bureau. Head Start Program Performance Standards, 1981. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981.

Valentine, Jeanette and Zigler, Edward. Project Head Start. New York: The Free Press, 1979.

Willman, Betty. "Parent Participation as a Factor in the Effectiveness of Head Start Programs", The Journal of Educational Research (May-June 1969).